RUTH THE MOABITESS

ALFRED LEEDES HUNT M. A.

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A Short Commentary,
Critical and Expository, on the
Book of Ruth.

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PREFACE.

THIS little work, planned and partly executed when the Author was the Vicar of an East London Parish, can make but small claim to originality. It is simply an attempt to gather within a small compass what others have thought and written on the subject, together with the addition here and there of notes, lesson outlines, etc. The best critical writers, both English and German, have been consulted, and selections have been made from the expository commentaries of the older and too little read divines. That the book may be useful to some—and especially, it is hoped, to Sunday School Teachers—is the earnest wish of the Author, who sends it forth with the prayer that God may bless it, and that it may be to the glory of His Holy Name.

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RUTH THE MOABITESS.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. The Book.

1. **The Book**, though containing only eighty-five verses, is important; for—(1) It gives the genealogy of the descent of David from Perez (Pharez of Gen. xxxviii. 29, the son of Judah) through Boaz and Ruth, thus showing the origin of David's family and his descent from Judah. The books of Samuel, which describe the life and history of David, make no mention of his descent from Ruth, whose name is also omitted in the chronology of Chronicles, though that of Boaz is mentioned. (2) It affords an insight into the family life and customs of the Jewish ancestors of King David, sketching them as walking uprightly before God and man. (3) It

typifies the admission of Gentiles into the Church of Christ, by showing the Moabitish link in the descent of One who should bring salvation to all nations, and that 'God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.'

Acts x. 34, 35.

It is called 'the book of Ruth,' not 'the book of Boaz,' or 'the book of the Descent of David,' because Ruth is the chief subject of the story. 'It hath the name from Ruth, the most remarkable person in it, to whom God vouchsafed His grace, not only to write her name in the book of life in heaven, but also to prefix her name before a book of life on earth.'

Fuller.

It may be looked upon as an appendix to the book of Judges and a preface to the life of David as related in the books of Samuel.

The apparent references to the Old Testament will be found in the course of the notes on the text; it is not quoted or referred to in the New Testament, unless the part of the chronology from Hezron to David be taken from chap. iv. 19–22.

Matt. i. 3-6; Luke iii. 32, 33.

2. **The Character of the Book.** (1) It breathes a spirit of charity. No fault is found with the conduct of Elimelech in leaving Bethlehem for Moab; no blame attributed to Mahlon and Chilion for marrying Moabitish women, or to the kinsman for his selfish conduct in refusing to marry Ruth.

(2) It is of a private nature. It records the deeds of no judge, but simply the events in the domestic life of one poor family. In this we see the contrast between this book and that of the Judges; the latter being a record of war and strife, the former a chronicle of hearth and home. 'The book of Ruth is like some beautiful landscape of Claude, with its soft mellow hues of quiet eventide and the peaceful expanse of its calm lake, placed side by side with some stern picture of Salvator Rosa, exhibiting the shock of armies and the storm of war, and receiving more beauty from the chiaro-obscuro of the contrast.' *Wordsworth.*

3. **The Author.** No name is given, but the book is generally attributed to Samuel, who, from 1 Chron. xxix. 29, we know to

have been an historian. By some it has been ascribed to David himself. 'Even as a man that hath a piece of gold that he knows to be weight, and sees it stamped with the king's image, careth not to know the name of that man who minted or coined it, so we, seeing the book to have the superscription of Cæsar, the stamp of the Holy Ghost, need not to be curious to know who was the penman thereof.'

Fuller.

4. **Date of Composition.** (*a*) Not before the birth of David (his name being mentioned iv. 22).

(*b*) Not until some time after the days of the Judges (i. 1 shows that in the writer's time a different state of things prevailed, *i.e.* that there was a monarchy in the writer's days).

(*c*) Not until many years after the events happened (the custom alluded to in iv. 7 being spoken of as obsolete):

As (a) the genealogy closes at the birth of David;

(b) The whole book breathes the spirit of the time of David, in whose reign the relations between the Jews and Gentiles were of a friendly nature, we may conclude

See *e.g.* David's friendship with Moab, 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.

that it was written during his reign, and probably when his power was at its height.

5. **Date of History.** The only note of time is in i. 1. 'when the judges ruled;' but as the judges ruled for nearly five centuries, and the name of any particular judge is not given, no certain clue is afforded as to the exact date. Josephus says it was in the time of Eli, Assher of Shamgar, others of Gideon, citing in their favour Judg. vi. 3–6, where we read, 'They (the Midianites) destroyed the increase of the earth until thou come unto Gaza,' which might, of course, have been the reason of the famine mentioned in i. 1.

6. **Place in the Canon.** In the Hebrew Bible Ruth is placed among the five Megilloth ('volumes,' 'rolls' = Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), but it is probable that originally it formed part of the book of Judges, as Origen states was the case 185-253 A.D. in his days. In the English Version, Septuagint (= Greek Version of the Old Testament) and Vulgate (= Jerome's Latin Version of the Old Testament), it is placed next after Judges, as also in Luther's

Bible. In fact there is a marked resemblance between this book and the appendix to Judges (= last five chapters of that book), each recording not the deeds of the judges, but simply events which happened during the time of their rule.

In the synagogue it is read during the feast of Pentecost, or Weeks.

§ II. Leading Lessons.

(i.) The ways of Providence.

(ii.) The power of love.

(iii.) The reward of constancy and obedience.

(iv.) The encouragement of unselfish virtue.

(v.) The existence of piety in the days of universal wickedness.

(vi.) The influence of religion upon daily life.

(vii.) The call of the Gentiles.

Cumming. Ruth, a chapter in Providence.

Topsell. The reward of religion.

Bernard. Ruth's recompense.

'The first chapter showeth that many are

the troubles of the righteous: the three last, that God delivereth them out of them all.' *Fuller.*

'Oh, the sure and bountiful payments of the Almighty! Who ever came under His wing in vain? Who ever lost by trusting Him? Who ever forsook the Moab of this world for the true Israel, and did not at last rejoice in the change?' *Bp. Hall.*

how little he valued the blessings of the Promised Land. The Jewish writers trace his death (as a punishment) to this cause.—2. **Elimelech** ('God is thy King'), from the construction of his name a distinguished man, was descended from Nahshon, called in 1 Chron. ii. 10 'prince of the children of Judah' (the brother-in-law of Aaron), whose name appears in the genealogies of Christ as Naasson.—**Naomi**, more correctly Noomi, 'delight,' 'sweetness.'—**Mahlon**, the elder son, 'weakness.'—**Chilion**, 'wasting,' 'pining.' Names among the Jews had usually a significance: sometimes they expressed the hopes, sometimes the sorrow of the parent; sometimes they were intended to describe the appearance or circumstances of the child. Here they seem to have been given by reason of the sad state of the land at the time of their birth.—**Ephrathites**. Ephratah ('fruitful') was the ancient name for Beth-lehem. Sometimes the two names were joined. The word 'Ephrathites' here shows that Elimelech's family were natives of Beth-lehem, and belonged properly to the tribe of Judah, not merely residents in Bethlehem.

Num. i. 7.
Ex. vi. 23.
Matt. i 4; Luke iii. 32.
See ver. 20.
Gen. iv. 1. 1 Chron. iv. 9.
Gen. xxvii. 36; Ex. ii. 10.
Ruth iv. 11; Ps. cxxxii. 6. Ephrath of Gen. xxxv. 19. Mic. v. 2.
See 1 Sam. xvii. 12.

—3. **died.** Whether at once we are not told. Josephus conjectures at the end of ten years; but this seems improbable.—4. **wives.** Such marriages for Israelites were doubtless wrong. Though not mentioned by name in the prohibition of Deut. vii. 1–3, the Moabites would belong to the class of nations with whom, owing to their idolatry, the Jews would feel themselves forbidden to marry, especially if they bore in mind the injunction of Deut. xxiii. 3. In Neh. xiii. 1, 3, the law of Deut. xxiii. is interpreted as forbidding such marriages. There seems nothing to show that they became proselytes to the Jewish faith before their marriage. The Targum (Jewish paraphrase) comments 'they transgressed the decree of the Lord.'—**women of Moab.** The Moabitish women, as a class, did not bear a fair name.—**Orpah,** 'the hind.' **Ruth,** 'friendship,' the wife of the elder son, Mahlon. According to Jewish tradition, they were sisters, and the daughters of Eglon, king of Moab.—**ten.** Whether from the time of their arrival, or of the marriage, is not mentioned.

See Ezra ix. 1; Neh. xiii. 1, 3.

See Num. xxv. 1 3.

iv. 10.

—5. **died.** Because they married strange women their days were cut short.

Targum.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

1. Israel had sinned. 'A fruitful land maketh He barren for the sin of the people that dwell therein.' Man proved unfaithful to God his Maker, the earth proved unfruitful to man her manurer. If Elimelech had made inquiry, it is probable he would have found plenty in some of the tribes of Israel.

Fuller.

Henry.

3. No outward plenty can privilege us from death. Though he could avoid the arrows of famine in Israel, yet he could not shun the darts of death in Moab.

Fuller.

4. Nothing can be brought for the defence of these matches; something may be said for the excuse of them, but that fetched not from piety but from policy. This cross (their father's death) brought them not to think of leaving that idolatrous country, but they settled themselves to marry there.

Fuller

Bernard.

5. Death takes not men in seniority. Many men have had affliction, none like Job; many women have had tribulation, none like Naomi.

Fuller.

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

1–5. **Sin**, its punishment—(*a*) in nations. Examples—Sodom and Gomorrah,[1] children of Israel,[2] Babylon.[3] (*b*) In individuals—Elimelech, leaving Bethlehem through want of faith, meets with a grave in Moab. 'We cannot expect to prosper when we go out of the way of our duty.' Contrast the blessing promised in Ps. xxxvii. 3 and the example of Boaz, Elimelech's kinsman, who remained in Bethlehem and became 'a mighty man of wealth.'

Cf. Lev. xxvi. 18–20 with Ruth i. 1.

[1] Gen. xviii. 20, and 2 Pet. ii. 6.
[2] Ex. xxxii. 31–35.
[3] Jer. li. 16.

Henry.

ii. 1.

2. **Sin**, its power—(*a*) over Elimelech. He went only 'to sojourn' (1), yet he 'continued there' (2). Sin deceitful; one temptation yielded to is followed by another (cf. Lot, who at first only 'pitched his tent toward Sodom,' then dwelt in Sodom). (*b*) Over his family. The unlawful marriages of his sons may be traced to Elimelech's 'sojourn' in Moab. Sin spreads; its consequences are wide.

Heb. iii. 13.

Gen. xiii. 12.

Cf. Lot's daughters, Gen. xix. 14, 30, etc.

3. **Life**, its uncertainty. Man proposes, God disposes. Youth no safeguard against death. Examples of the death of young men—Hophni and Phinehas, Nadab and

1 Sam. iv. 11.
Lev. x. 1, 2.

2 Sam. xiii. 28, 29. 2 Sam. xviii. 15. Abihu, Amnon, Absalom. The importance of the advice in Eccles. xii. 1, 'Remember *now*,' etc.

4. **Marriage**, the importance of right choice. Exhortation of St. Paul ('Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers') ought to be borne in mind by Christians, whose duty it is 'to marry in the Lord.'

Cor. vi. 14

The Return (6–22).

'A brotherhood of exiles here,
We seek a home above,
Where Thou wilt gather in Thine own
Who live in holy love.'

'The heart has many a dwelling-place,
But only once a home.'

Naomi, Elimelech's widow, returns to Bethlehem. Her two daughters-in-law accompany her to the border-land of Moab and Israel, where Orpah leaves her. Ruth refuses to be parted, and with her mother-in-law reaches Bethlehem at harvest-time.

Ex. iv. 31; Ps. lxxx. 14; Luke i. 68 (the 'Benedictus' of our Church Service).

6. **visited**, remembered, after He had seemed for a long time to forget. It is

said that a famine in Lydia once lasted eighteen years.—7. **with her.** This points to Naomi's wise and loving treatment of her daughters-in-law; also to the attractive purity of the Jewish home. If there were more Naomis, there might be more Orpahs and Ruths. Contrast the German proverb, 'The mother-in-law has forgotten that she was ever a daughter-in-law.'—8. **said,** possibly at the brook Arnon, which separated Moab from the land of Reuben.—**mother's house.** This does not show that their father was dead (from ii. 11 we gather that Ruth's father was living); the words simply denote a mother's care.—9. **rest,** *i.e.* that ye may be happily married again. The position of an unmarried woman in the East, whether maid or widow, was not an enviable one; only in the house of her husband could she meet with the necessary protection and respect.—**kissed,** as a signal of parting.—11. **my womb,** to show them that they, as Moabitesses, could hope for nothing in Israel beyond what she could give them, the Israelites being likely to avoid marriage with Moabites. There is here a reference to the law by which a

Gen. xxxi 28; 1 Kings xix. 20.

Deut xxv 5.

brother was bound, in order to prevent the family name from dying out, and to preserve the property from passing into the hands of strangers, to marry the widow of his brother who died without issue.—12. **hope**, *i.e.* of having a husband. For argument's sake, she puts the case in three ways, all virtually impossible:—(i.) the possibility of her being married again ('if I should say, I have hope'); (ii.) the possibility of her being married at once ('to-night'); (iii.) the possibility of the two widows waiting for male issue from such a marriage ('would ye tarry?') in order to be their wives according to the Levirate law. The words of Naomi, though seemingly harsh, were the language of a love which foresaw the difficulties of the future. 'God wrestled with Jacob with a desire to be conquered. So Naomi opposed these two Moabitesses, hoping and wishing that she herself might be foiled.'—13. **tarry** (so Tamar, but in that case Shelah was some years old), stay, literally, shut yourselves up, as the brides of the future sons of Naomi.—**grieveth**, etc., more literally, 'It is much more bitter for me than

See Appendix A.

Fuller.

See also our Lord's words in Luke xiv. 28.

Gen. xxxviii. 11.

for you,' *i.e.* my lot is worse than yours. You have each lost a husband; I two sons and a husband.—14. **clave.** Note how Ruth and Orpah differ both in conduct and character; the religion of principle and the religion of impulse.—15. **gods.** It was the fact that they worshipped different gods which really separated Naomi, as an Israelitess, from Moab.—16. **my God,** accepted as yet only from her love to Naomi. Compare, for the earnest determination, the case of Elisha, and the Canaanitish woman.—17. **the Lord,** etc. She makes use of the Hebrew oath ('So,' etc. = 'may God punish me in any way He sees fit,' the punishment, to make the oath more solemn, not being mentioned), to show that Naomi's God was hers also.—18. Contrast Lot's wife, and the men mentioned in Luke ix. 57–62.—19. **city,** in reality but a village.—**they,** the women of Bethlehem (the verb being feminine).—**moved,** the excitement being caused by her being all alone and so altered in circumstances. Compare the lowly traveller who, 1300 years after, journeyed in poverty to Bethlehem (the Virgin Mary). Both were

See Gen. xix. 9.

See Gen. ii. 24.

See note on ver. 1.

2 Kings ii. 2–6.

Matt. xv. 22–28.

See 1 Sam. iii. 17; 2 Sam. xix. 13.

Gen. xix. 26.

poor, yet both made Bethlehem famous.—
Ex. xv. 23; Lam. iii. 15. 20. **Mara,** 'bitter.' For other instances of change of name, see Gen. xxxii. 28, Jer. xx. 3.—**The Almighty** (Heb. 'Shaddai,' points to God's attributes of unchangeableness and omnipotence), a term rarely used except in the Pentateuch and book of Job, the name by which God was known to the
Ex. vi. 2, 3. patriarchs.—21. **I . . . the Lord.** I went away because it was my wish to go, not
Cf. Amos iii. 6. God's; now God has sent me back.—**full,** *i.e.* with a husband and two sons; empty, *i.e.* without them. There is no necessary reference to money in the word 'full.' Contrast Jacob's
Gen. xxxii. 10. experience.—**testified,** borne witness against
Targum. me (a law term), 'has declared me guilty' by
Ex. xx. 16; Deut. xix. 16; 2 Sam. i 16. sending this affliction upon me. 'God Himself is both judge and witness, and also the
Cf. Job xiii. 25. executor and inflicter of punishment.'—22. **barley-harvest** = months of Nisan and Abib (corresponding to our April). The barley-harvest commenced on the second day of the first-fruits of unleavened bread (16th of Nisan), when the sheaf of the first-fruits was offered to the Lord, and not till then (according to Josephus) might the
See Lev. xxiii. 10-12. harvest be commenced. Barley being ripe

before wheat, the harvest commenced with the former, and the wave sheaf was composed of it.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

6. Whiles her husband and her sons lived, I hear no motion of retiring home; now these earthly stays are removed, she thinks presently of removing to her own country. Neither can we so heartily think of our home above while we are furnished with these worldly contentments; when God strips us of them, straightway our mind is homeward. *Bp. Hall.*

8. Many give counsel, like lawyers, for their fees, but few, like Naomi, for their conscience. She loves their company well, but counsels their safety better. Gold and *Topsell.* silver she had not for them, but that which was better, heartiest orisons and well-wishes. *Trapp.*

14. Orpah, a blazing meteor falling down out of the air; Ruth, a fixed star fairly shining in the heaven. Ruth saw so much *Fuller.* upon ten years' trial in Naomi as was worth more than all Moab. The next degree unto godliness is the love of good- *Bp. Hall.*

ness. Ruth's attachment was worth ten
Lawson. thousand of Orpah's kisses.

16. It has not in any age been common for the greatest of saints to have the softest beds and most comfortable lodgings; and yet in every age God has had His followers and witnesses, and the Church her un-
MacGowan. feigned lovers.

19. Shrubs may be grubbed to the ground and none miss them; but every one marks the falling of a cedar. Grovelling cottages may be levelled to the earth and none observe; but every traveller takes notice of
Fuller. the fall of a steeple.

20. Naomi went full out of Bethlehem to prevent want, and now she brings that want
Bp. Hall. home with her which she desired to avoid.

21. Afflictions are a testimony against men that they are sinners, but they are not always a testimony that the sufferer is guilty of some particular sins for which
Job ii. 3. *Lawson.* God chastiseth him. Afflictions relish sour and bitter even to the palates of the best
Fuller. saints. With God's children the smoking furnace of temptation usually precedes the
MacGowan. smiling lamp of gospel consolation. Sancti-
Dodd. fied afflictions are spiritual promotions.

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

6. **Affliction**, its lessons. Earthly comforts removed should make us think more of heaven. Deut. xxxii. 29; Ps. xc. 12.

10. **True religion**, its attractiveness. The power, in Naomi's case, of a generous, unselfish spirit. Aim of the Christian life should be to 'live Christ.' Phil. i. 21.

14. **Religion**, in appearance and reality. The religion of impulse and the religion of principle. Many, like Orpah, apparently start well and then turn back (so 'stony ground' hearers in Matt. xiii. 20, 21; the disciples of John vi. 66). 'They fall deepest into hell that fall backwards into hell.' *Bunyan.*

16. **Ruth's choice.** (i.) Made in youth; (ii.) in spite of discouragements;—she had 'counted the cost;' (iii.) an entire surrender; (iv.) life-long.

20. **Affliction**, its sanctifying power. Tribulation worketh patience, the fruit of which is perfection. In affliction the Christian sees and owns the hand of God. Job i. 21; 1 Sam. iii. 18; Heb. xii. 11. Rom. v. 3. Jas. i. 4.

CHAPTER II.

The Harvest-Field (1–17).

'There are in this loud stunning tide
  Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
  Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart;
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.'

Ruth, to support Naomi and herself, begs leave of her mother-in-law to glean. Led by God's providence to the fields of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's late husband, she meets with kindness at his hands.

1. This verse serves as an introduction to the events about to be narrated.—**Kinsman.** According to the Rabbis, a nephew of Elimelech, but the word, used only three times in the Bible, denotes a distant connection rather than a near relationship; hence the nobleness of Boaz's

Cf. iii. 2; Prov. vii. 4.

subsequent conduct. The word is not the same as that translated 'next kinsman' in ver. 20 (on which see note).—**wealth.** So Gideon,[1] Jephthah,[2] Kish,[3] Naaman.[4] Rather a mighty man of valour, 'a valiant hero,' there not being any necessary reference to money or property (cf. the word 'wealth' in our Litany = prosperity generally).—**family of Elimelech.** Contrast the two relations: Elimelech, through want of faith, leaving his home and dying poor; Boaz, owning God's providence and staying in Bethlehem, and in consequence blessed of God.—**Boaz** (= Booz of Matt. i. 5; Luke iii. 32), 'in him is strength,' occurs as the name of one of the pillars in the porch of Solomon's temple. The Jewish writers identify him with Ibzan, but, it would seem, wrongly. He was the son of Salmon and Rahab, and the grandson of Nahson.—2. **Glean.** The privilege of gleaning, though allowed to the poor and the stranger by the laws of Moses, was, it would seem from vers. 9 and 22, sometimes denied. As a Moabitess Ruth may have thought she needed special permission. The corners of fields were not to be reaped, the owner was not

[1] Judges vi. 12.
[2] Judges xi. 1.
[3] 1 Sam. ix. 1.
[4] 2 Kings v 1.

1 Kings vii. 21; 2 Chron. iii. 17.

Judges xii. 8.

Matt. i. 5.

Lev. xix. 9, xxiii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 19.

to glean his own field, and a sheaf accidentally left behind was not to be taken away, but left for the poor.—3. **part of the field**, better 'the field portion,' the fields being divided by a heap of small stones, not a wall, as in the case of vineyards.—4. **The Lord**, etc. For the salutation and reply, customary even now in the East, see Judg. vi. 12, Ps. cxxix. 8, and the versicles of our Prayer-Book, 'The Lord be with you, And with thy spirit.' Compare also our 'Good-bye' = 'God be with you.'—7. **that** = save that.—**house**. The tent or shed in which the reapers rested themselves and took their meals.—8. **maidens**, who helped in cutting down and gathering in the harvest.—9. **thine eyes**. Because, there being no hedges, she might possibly, without knowing it, pass into the field of another proprietor. 'The reapers are gathered from all parts of the country, and largely from the ruder class, and, living far from home, throw off all restraint and give free licence to their tongues, if nothing more.'—10. **fell**. So Abigail.—12. **recompense**, etc. The similarity of this language to Gen. xv. 1, and of verse 11 to Gen.

Kitto.

Deut. xix. 14; xxvii. 17.

Land and the Book, p. 648.

1 Sam. xxv. 23.

xii. 1, suggests that Boaz had in mind the case of Abraham.—**wings.** An allusion probably to the wings of the cherubim spreading over the mercy-seat.—13. **like unto.** Even as—(note her humility)—because I am a foreigner.—14. **morsel,** sop.—**vinegar.** Sour wine, made of wine vinegar mixed with oil, used as sauce in which to sop bread, etc. The vinegar of Matt. xxvii. 48 was of this kind. As sour wine the Nazarites were forbidden to drink it. —**parched,** roasted ears of corn, eaten now as then, with bread or instead of it. —**left.** Some remaining. The same word as 'reserved' (18).—15. **among.** Between, in the place where the maidens bind the sheaves (a privilege not allowed gleaners generally). Being nearest the maidens who bound the sheaves, she would thus pick up the most ears. Note the difference between what she asked for (to glean outside the line of sheaves as the other gleaners) and the privilege actually granted.—17. **beat out** with a stick. In the East this was and is still done in the field itself.—**ephah.** About a bushel, sufficient to last Naomi and Ruth for five days.

See Ps. xxxvi. 7, xci. 4; Matt. xxiii. 37.

Cf. 1 Sam. xxv. 41.

Cf John xiii. 26.

Num. vi. 3.

1 Sam. xvii. 17.

ver. 7.

Ex. xvi. 36.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

Trapp. 1. Rich, yet religious, a rare bird. Boaz stayed at home and found that which *Bp. Hall.* Elimelech went out to find and missed.

2. High spirits can more easily starve than stoop. Ruth was none of these. She does not tell her mother she was never brought up to live upon crumbs. Though she was not brought up to it, she was brought *Henry.* down to it and is not uneasy at it.

3. How comes the Holy Spirit to use this word ('hap'), a profane term, which deserves to be banished out of the mouths of all Christians? Are not all things ordered by God's immediate providence, without which 'a sparrow lighteth not on the ground'? Answer: Things are said to 'happen' not in respect of God, but in respect of us; because oftentimes they come to pass, not only without our purpose and forecast, but even against our *Fuller.* intentions and determinations. There is a providence that attends on us in all our ways, and guides us insensibly to His own ends; that Divine hand leads Ruth blind-*Bp. Hall.* fold to the field of Boaz.

4. All the business of the family speeds the better for the master's benediction. Those affairs are likely to succeed that take their beginning at God. *Bp. Hall.*

7. A whet is no let, saith the proverb; mowers lose not any time which they spend in whetting or grinding of their scythes. Our prayer to God in the morning, before we enter on any business, doth not hinder us in our day's work, but rather whets it, sharpens it, sets an edge on our dull souls, and makes our minds to undertake our labours with the greater alacrity. *Fuller.*

12. This meditation of the reward is a good place for our souls to bait at, but a bad place for our souls to lodge in; we must mount our minds higher, namely, to aim at the glory of God, at which all our actions must be directed, though there were no reward propounded unto them. Reward and recompense unto our good works are not due unto us for any worth of our own, but merely from God's free favour and gracious promise. *Fuller.*

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

Habak. ii 4. 1. **Faith**: the just lives by. See lesson hint on i. 1, and the examples in Heb. xi.

1 Pet. v. 5. 2. **Humility**: a mark of grace. Contrast conduct of unjust steward ('I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed'). No shame in honest poverty; sin only brings shame.

Luke xvi. 3.
1 Cor. iv. 11, 12.

3. **Providence**: God's dealings in. Exemplified in case of Ruth here. Steps: (i.) God brings her to a state of want, thus compelling her to put aside any feeling of pride, and to work for her living; (ii.) God leads her to the fields of Boaz, Naomi's rich relation; (iii.) God brings her to the field at the time of the master's visit, thus causing her introduction to him. See 'Selected Thoughts' on ver. 3.

4. **Religion** in daily life. A thing to live by as well as to die by; is seen in trifles of everyday routine, as in acts of devotion. So St. James, 'the tongue is a little member,' yet 'if any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, . . . this man's religion is vain.' Religion here seen in the relationship between employer and employed.

Jas. iii. 5.

i. 26.

12. **God's recompense**: (*a*) prayed for by the righteous; (*b*) promised to the righteous; God's blessing meets us in the pathway of duty; (*c*) expected by the righteous.

Neh. xiii. 14, 22. Gen. xv. 1; Matt. x. 41, 42. Ps. xxxvii. 23. Heb. xi. 26.

12. **God's protection**: (*a*) prayed for by the righteous; (*b*) promised to the righteous; (*c*) expected by the righteous.

Ps. xvii. 5-8. Ps. xci. 4, cxxi. 7, 8. 2 Tim. iv. 18.

13. **Kindness**: should be shown towards strangers.

1 Tim. v. 10; Heb. xiii. 2.

14. **Provision for the poor**: the duty of the Christian; shall not lose its reward.

Mark x. 21. Ps. xli. 1; Prov. xxii. 9. Contrast Jas. ii. 15, 16.

16. **Liberality**: should be a mark of true religion; is pleasing to God.

2 Cor. ix. 7.

At Home (18–23).

'The common round, the daily task,
Should furnish all we need to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.'

Ruth, on her return home at night, recounts the kindness she has received of Boaz, in whom Naomi recognises her kinsman. In his fields Ruth gleans to the end of wheat-harvest.

18. **brought forth**, out of her scrip or bag. —**reserved**, etc., what she had left over after she was satisfied.—19. **blessed**, etc. The quantity of corn brought home, together with the parched corn, showed Naomi that Ruth must have been treated with special favour by some one.—20. **blessed**, etc. Whether Naomi refers to the Lord or to Boaz is doubtful. A reference to Gen. xxiv. 27 points to the former. If so taken, some see a reference to the immortality of the soul; God's love being spoken of as still shown to them after death; or, perhaps, more simply, the words refer to God's care for their widows.—**next kinsman**, or 'Redeemer.' On the Goel, see Appendix B.—**one**. But not the nearest.—22. **meet**. Literally, 'fall upon,' ill-treat.—23. **wheat-harvest**. A month later.—**dwelt** each evening when she returned from gleaning.

See Matt. xxii. 32.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

18. Let not God's saints be disheartened; if their Father hath a bottle wherein He puts the tears which they spend, sure He hath a balance wherein He weighs the burdens which they bear. He keeps a

note to what weight their burdens amount, and (no doubt) will accordingly comfort them. *Fuller.*

19. It is a good question for us to ask ourselves in the close of every day, 'Where have I gleaned to-day?' What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace? What have I done or obtained that will turn to a good account? *Henry.*

'Sum up at night what thou hast done by day;
And in the morning what thou hast to do.
Dress and undress thy soul; mark the decay
And growth of it.' *George Herbert.*

20. Though old Barzillai is incapable of thy favours, let young Chimham taste of thy kindness. Though the dead cannot, need not have thy mercy, yet may they receive thy kindness by a proxy, by their friends that are still living. *Fuller.*

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

18. **An unselfish spirit.** Rom. xv. 1-3.

19. (Taken in a spiritual sense) the importance of self-scrutiny. Life given for service; how have we used each day? Time a talent for the right use of which we are responsible. The past is gone for ever, but the future is available. Eph. v. 16. Col. iv. 5.

CHAPTER III.

The Threshing-Floor (1–18).

'In little things of common life,
There lies the Christian's noblest strife.
When he does conscience make
Of every thought and throb within,
And words and looks of self and sin
Crushes for Jesus' sake.'

'Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.'

By the advice of Naomi, Ruth claims marriage of Boaz. He explains that there is a nearer kinsman than himself, but promises, in the event of his refusing to redeem, himself to do it.

Cf. i. 9. 1. **rest.** A resting-place (in the house of a husband.)—2. **winnoweth.** The grain was thrown up with a fork or broad shovel

against the wind, so that the chaff was blown away and the wheat fell to the ground. The stalks were previously beaten or trodden by oxen on the threshing-floor, which was merely a piece of the field stamped flat and hard, and was open to the sky.—**to-night.** So as to take advantage of the night breeze which sprang up about sunset; the Targum reads 'in the night wind.'—3. **down.** Because Bethlehem was built on a hill, and the fields were in the valley below.—4. **lieth down** on the threshing-floor, under the open sky (rain in harvest-time being very rare), that he might keep watch over his corn. This is done even now. 'The owners of the crops came every night and slept upon their threshing-floors to guard them.' Before passing any harsh judgment on the advice of Naomi or the conduct of Ruth, we must not forget—(i.) that Naomi looked upon Boaz as the next of kin; (ii.) that as such it would be his duty, according to Israelitish law, to marry Ruth; (iii.) that she had probably noticed the affection which had sprung up between Boaz and Ruth; (iv.) that she relied upon the staid character of Boaz and the virtue

Gen. iii. 8; Jer. iv. 11, 12.

1 Sam. xii. 17, 18.

Robinson: *Biblical Researches.*

of Ruth. We must further bear in mind that, according to Eastern ideas, there would be nothing improper in a plan so devised and executed.—**his feet.** Literally, 'what is at his feet,' *i.e.* the cloak which covers them. Boaz would have laid down with his clothes on, simply throwing a cloak or rug over him.—7. **merry.** Innocent mirth was always allowed at the time of harvest. The Targum explains, 'He blessed the name of the Lord who had heard his prayer and taken away the famine from the land of Israel.'—8. **afraid,** because he felt somebody was lying at his feet.—**turned himself.** Bent himself forward.—9. **spread thy skirt** (literally wings). Either (i.) the corner of the cloak, to show he took her as his wife, this being the symbol of the right she claimed; or, (ii.) as in ii. 12, meaning simply protection. 'Take thine handmaid under thy protection.' Those who interpret as (i.) refer to the practice in Jewish marriage ceremonies of lifting the bridegroom's robe and placing it over the bride's head. For an able argument in favour of (ii.) see *Sunday at Home* (1877), page 645, 'Wings and Skirts.'—10. **blessed,**

Cf. Luke xv. 24.

Judg. ix. 27; Isa. ix. 3.

Cf. Ezek. xvi. 8; Is. iv. 1; Zech. viii. 23.

etc., shows what the upright Boaz thought of Ruth's act.—**beginning.** Towards thy husband and mother-in-law.—**latter** ii. 11.
end. In thine attachment towards myself thy kinsman, advanced in years though I be. As a contemporary of Elimelech, Boaz must have been considerably older than Ruth.—**followedst,** with a view to marriage. On account of her beauty she would naturally have many suitors.—11. **city,** marginal Gen. xxii. 17, xxxiv. 24.
reading, 'gate' = the people who go in and Cf. Prov. xxxi. 10.
out the gate.—**virtuous.**—12. **nearer.** Because more closely related to Elimelech.—13. **perform—kinsman,** literally, 'redeem.'—14. **one,** etc., literally, 'before a man could know his friend.'—15. **veil** or cloak: a word only used here and in Isa. iii. 22 (where it is translated 'wimple').—**measures.** What measure we are not told.—**She went.** Hebrew = 'he,' *i.e.* Boaz.—16. **who art thou.** Either (i.) the light was so dim still that she could not distinguish or (ii.) See ver. 14.
the words may mean 'what art thou?' *i.e.* in what character hast thou come, as the betrothed of Boaz, or simply as Ruth the widow of Mahlon?—18. **finished.** As she was sure he would, both from his

affection for Ruth as well as from his well-known integrity.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

4. Seek Him in private, when no eye but that of Heaven is upon thee; come secretly to His feet, and lay thy helpless, desolate state open before His seat of mercy; freely confess the baseness of thine original; He will not despise thee on account of the hole of the pit from whence thou wast digged. *MacGowan.*

5. We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue and too much sense to promise as she did. The face of that action to which she directs her is the worst piece of it; the heart was sound. *Henry.* *Bp. Hall.*

11. A man who had learned to square his actions to the law of God. *Bp. Hall.*

14. A good heart is no less afraid of a scandal than of a sin. *Bp. Hall.*

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

1. **Marriage**: should be a state of rest. As signifying 'the union betwixt Christ and

His Church,' it typifies the rest which the Christian finds in Christ, Who said, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' Matt. xi. 28

9. **Christ our Redeemer.** See Appendix B, and Outline Lesson.

14. **Evil**: even the appearance of it to be avoided. 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.' All ground for scandal to be avoided. 1 Thess. v. 22. Prov. xxii. 1. See also Phil. ii. 15.

18. **Business**: should be promptly carried out. Danger of delay. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Eccles. ix. 10. A righteous man like Boaz is not slothful in business. Rom. xii. 11. Cf. Prov. xxii. 29.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Gate (1–8).

'Rise! for the day is passing,
And you lie dreaming on;
The others have buckled their armour,
And forth to the fight are gone:
A place in the ranks awaits you,
Each man has some part to play;
The past and the future are nothing
In the face of the stern to-day.'

Boaz, on the refusal of the nearest kinsman to redeem the inheritance of Elimelech, does so himself in the presence of the assembled elders.

Cf. iii. 3.

1. **up.** Because Bethlehem was situated on a hill.—**the gate** (=the open space before the gate) was used as a market for transacting the city business generally and for holding trials. The Targum explains 'The Sanhedrim,' and infers that Boaz was a judge.—**came by,** as he necessarily must

See Gen. xxxiv. 20. Deut. xvi. 18, xxi. 19.

have done to get to his fields, there being only one gate to the city.—**such a one.** The Hebrew expression *Peloni Almoni* (used now to denote an unknown donor to the synagogue) cannot be exactly rendered. It is used to show that the name of the kinsman is suppressed. An English writer would probably put it thus: 'Ho, Mr. —.' The expression occurs only in 1 Sam. xxi. 2; 2 Kings vi. 8, where it is translated 'such and such.' Boaz called him, of course, by his name, but the writer does not use it.—2. **ten** men as witnesses. The elders acted as local magistrates; ten would probably be the necessary number to form a court, just as in later times it was considered necessary to have ten men to form an assembly for religious worship.—3. **selleth.** It seems best to take this word literally = 'sold' rather than 'selleth' of the English Version. To whom we are not told; certainly not to Boaz. The land (*i.e.* the interest of Naomi in the land) was sold either (i.) by Elimelech; (ii.) by Naomi after his death. Land might be sold to the period of the next jubilee (when it returned to its original owner), but the next

Gen. xxiii. 17, 18.
Deut. xvi. 18.

of kin had the right to redeem it by paying its value from the time of purchase to the next jubilee. It is of this right that Boaz speaks here. Elimelech's name remained on the property still, and would do so while Naomi his widow lived; thus she had a right to dispose of it, and in consequence had sold it. The land *had* been sold, but could be redeemed.—**brother** = kinsman. —4. **advertise**, literally uncover thine ear, *i.e.* by lifting up the locks of hair which cover it = I will inform.—**thought**, Hebrew = said.—**I will redeem.** He was anxious to redeem it as a good investment, that he might add to his own land.—5. **thou must buy**, etc. Boaz reminds him that with the right of redemption there went a duty, to marry Ruth. As the widow of the son of Elimelech and Naomi, the land would be hers at Naomi's death, for if Elimelech's sons had lived, they would have been the heirs, but being dead, she was. If Ruth had not come back with Naomi, the inheritance would have belonged to the latter alone; in such case it could have been redeemed by the Goel, without his marrying her, as she was too old to bear sons. As things were, the

Lev. xxv. 25-28.

law of the Levirate would apply to Ruth: of her the land must be bought, as having an interest in it.—**raise up.** That the name of the dead might still be connected with the inheritance.—6. **mar,** injure. How, we are not told. Probably because if there were any son born he would be the heir, as if he had been Mahlon's own son, even though there might be older sons by the man's other wife (if married). The son would be reckoned as Mahlon's son, and not his, and called by Mahlon's name, and the inheritance would pass to the family of Elimelech. Thus the money spent in the redemption would be virtually thrown away, and his own income (or inheritance) diminished. This seems the best interpretation of what is confessedly a difficult passage. Other reasons have been given, as *e.g.*—(i.) that by bringing a Moabitish woman into his family, he would be incurring God's displeasure; (ii.) that he was afraid of causing divisions in his family.—7. **was.** See Introduction, sec. 1. (4).—**shoe.** As the symbol of possession. By taking off his shoe he surrendered all claim to walk on the soil as its possessor. When an

Deut. xxv. 5-7.

See law of Deut. xxiii. 3.

Ps. cviii. 9.

Arab divorces his wife, he says, 'She was my slipper and I cast her off.' According to the ancient Saxon custom, the bride, on becoming a wife, forfeited her shoe to her husband. In English law it was a custom to deliver a portion of the land, in cases of transfer of freehold land, as a symbol (such as a turf); it was called the 'livery of seisin,' and in later years was supplemented by a written document.—**testimony.** In later times writing was employed in transferring lands, etc.—8. It will be noticed that the law of Deut. xxv. 7–10 was not fully enforced. In fact, as the kinsman was not the brother of Ruth's deceased husband, it is doubtful whether it would reach him in all its strictness.

See Jer. xxxii. 10.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

6. This makes many shy of the great redemption; they are not willing to espouse religion. They are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be glad of, but holiness they can dispense with; it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused,

and therefore let him who will purchase heaven; at that rate, they cannot. Boaz, having to do with a wily worldling, deals warily with him; tells him first of the land, and then of the wife that must go along with it. *Henry.* *Trapp.*

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

6. **Selfishness**: hated by God, Whose law is, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Mal. i. 10. Lev. xix. 18; Matt xxii. 39.

6. **Redemption**: many refuse to avail themselves of (see outline lesson).

The Betrothal (9–12).

'For contemplation he and valour formed;
For softness she and sweet attractive grace:
He for God only; she for God in him.'

Ruth is publicly betrothed to Boaz, who receives the congratulations of the inhabitants assembled.

9. **all.** There was strictly only one property, but the names of Mahlon and Chilion are mentioned as being those who

would, in the ordinary course of things, had they been alive, have succeeded to it. Probably at this point of the proceedings Ruth was sent for to be openly espoused. —11. **Rachel.** Her name was doubtless placed before that of Leah, though the younger of the two sisters, because she was connected with Bethlehem; she was also the first wife in Jacob's intention. Rachel and Leah, in their youth, forsook their father's home, their former friends and relations, and followed their husband into Canaan.—**worthily,** *i.e.* by bringing forth worthy children.—**build,** by their twelve sons. —12. **Pharez** = Perez, the founder of the family. According to Jewish tradition, the Bethlehemites were descendants of Perez.

Gen. xxxv 19.

Ps. lx. 12; Prov. xxxi. 29. Gen. xxix., xxx., etc. Gen. xxxviii. 29; Num. xxvi. 20; 1 Chron. ii. 5.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

11. The way to be famous is to do worthily. Great reputation must be obtained by great merits. It is not enough not to do unworthily, to be harmless and inoffensive, but we must do worthily, be useful and serviceable to our generation. Those that would be truly illustrious must in their places shine as lights.

Henry.

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

11. **True manliness**: the mark of a Christian gentleman. Religion, as in the case of Boaz, must be shown in the home life. See St. Paul's advice, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. Cf. Luke viii. 39.

The Marriage (13–17).

'Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on,
Walk in His strength with faith and hope;
So shall thy work be done.'

Ruth is married to Boaz, and bears him a son, Obed.

13. **took.** This may not have been on the same day as that on which the betrothal took place; by law it must have been within thirty days after.—14. **kinsman,** *i.e.* the child (not Boaz), because as son of Ruth he would also be the son of Naomi, and this would take away from her the reproach of childlessness. — 15. **seven.** Many; seven denoting completeness. 17. —**Obed,** 'the serving one,' as the servant (i.) of God, (ii.) of Naomi, as the one who would take care of her and be the joy of her

Cf. 17.

1 Sam. ii. 5.

heart.—**father.** This shows that one of the objects which the writer of the book had before him was to trace the pedigree of David.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

17. A good name may call sometimes a man to the remembrance of his duty.

Bernard.

Obed. This signifieth 'serving'—to teach him, and also all children, their duty, which is this, to labour to be a comfort unto their parents.

Bernard

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

Gen. xxxiii. 5; Ps. cxxvii. 3.

14. **Children**: the gift of God.

15. **Children**: should be (*a*) restorers of life and joy—a child brings life into the home; (*b*) the support of old age.

Gen. xlv. 11, xlvii. 12.

The Pedigree (18–22).

'Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.'

The descent of David is traced from Pharez.

18. **Hezron.**[1] — 19. **Ram**[2] (= Aram).— **Amminadab,**[3] father-in-law of Aaron.—20. **Nahshon.**[4]—**Salmon** = Salma of 1 Chron. ii. 11), the husband of Rahab.[5]—22. **David.** Why does the genealogy end here? Probably because David at that time was alive and reigning as king. On the genealogy, see Appendix C.

[1] Gen. xlvi. 12
[2] Matt. i. 3; 1. Chron. ii. 9.
[3] Ex. vi. 23.
[4] See note on i. 1.
[5] Matt. i. 5.

SELECTED THOUGHTS.

We may note for the comfort of the godly, that great is the reward of religion. Ruth was of the Lord graciously rewarded. The Lord will not let goodness be unrewarded, for godliness hath the promise of this life and of the life to come. *Bernard.*

We may measure the greatness of Ruth's virtue by the greatness of her reward; from her seed Christ is sprung. *St. Jerome.*

HINTS FOR LESSONS.

18, etc. **The Book of Life**: the importance of having our names written therein.

Ex. xxxii. 33; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8.
Luke x. 20.

APPENDIX A.

The Law of the Levirate.

The law of the Levirate (*lex leviratus*), so called from *levir* (Latin for 'husband's brother'), is thus stated in Deut. xxv. 5, 6: 'If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. And it shall be that the first-born which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.'

To understand this, it must be remembered that amongst the Jews childlessness was looked upon as a reproach and a calamity; so much so, that though marriage with a brother's wife came within the list of

Gen. xvi. 4, xix. 31, etc.

prohibited degrees of affinity through the marriage of near blood relations, yet the law was set aside in such a case. The child born of the marriage bore the name of the deceased husband, and became the heir to the property of the deceased father; the widow, it would seem, enjoying the usufruct of it till the son came of age.

Lev. xviii. 16.

The custom was not originated by the laws of Moses, for (*a*) we find it existing among the Hebrews before the birth of Moses; (*b*) it is found among Eastern nations, both ancient and modern, *e.g.* Central Africa, Arabia, etc. The laws of Moses did not abolish it, but re-ordained it with certain rules and restrictions, providing a way of escape for the Levir, though attended with ignominy and reproach. It seems also to have extended to the nearest blood relation.

See Gen. xxxviii. 8.

See Deut. xxv. above; and Matt. xxii. 24.

Deut. xxv. 7–10.

If Mahlon and Chilion had brothers, it would have been their duty to marry Orpah and Ruth, as doubtless the custom prevailed in the land of Moab also. In the case of Naomi, as she was past the age of marriage, Boaz, as the next of kin, marries Ruth, her daughter-in-law, the child born

iv. 17. being reckoned that of Elimelech and Naomi, Mahlon being passed over.

APPENDIX B.

The Goel or Redeemer.

Four Hebrew words are translated 'kinsman' in the Old Testament; three denote simple relationship, the fourth ('Goel') denotes certain obligations arising from that relationship.

The meaning of the word seems to be 'one who frees' (either by avenging or repaying). It is used of God[1] and of man.[2]

[1] Ex. vi. 6, xv. 13; Job xix. 25; Isa. xliii. 1, etc.
[2] Lev. xxv. 25; Ruth iv. 4, etc.

The duties of the Goel were threefold: (i.) to re-purchase the inheritance when sold through want, etc.; (ii.) to ransom his kinsman from bondage; (iii.) to avenge the death of his kinsman. In the Book of Ruth it is used as in (i.). To understand fully the meaning of 'Goel' in this sense, we must bear in mind the conditions under which the Israelites held their land.

Lev. xxv. 25. Lev. xxv. 47-49. Num. xxxv. 19; Deut. xix. 6.

Jehovah, the Giver of the land, was its actual owner, the Israelite merely the holder of it under Him; thus he could not part with it at will, and it was to remain for ever in the family. In fact, the law of Moses with regard to land was one of strict entail. When, on account of poverty, he was obliged to sell, he could really only mortgage, not part with it; and it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem it. If not redeemed, it came back at the jubilee year to its original owner without compensation.

Lev. xxv. 23.

Lev. xxv. 10. See note on iv. 3.

The Goel seems to have been identified with the Levir, *but was not connected with him by the law of Moses.* It was naturally the case, as the Levir might often be the next of kin. We may put it thus: (i.) the Goel had the right to purchase the land, but thus came under the obligation, *from custom*, to marry the wife of the deceased owner; (ii.) the Levir was bound to marry her, and this involved the redemption of the property, if sold.

Appendix A.

In the case of Naomi, the next of kin, though willing to redeem the land, refused to marry Ruth.

See Appendix A.

On Christ, the Goel of mankind, see Outline Lesson on Christ the Redeemer.

APPENDIX C.

Genealogy of Chapter iv. (18–22).

ITS IMPORTANCE.—It had been fore-
Gen. xlix. 10. told that the Messiah should be of the
tribe of Judah; a further revelation was
Jer. xxiii. 5. also made that He should be of the family
of David. Thus, to fully understand the
prophecy, and to prevent any suspicion of
fraud, it was necessary that it should be
shown distinctly that David was of the tribe
of Judah; and further, that this should be
shown (as is done by this genealogy) *before the prophecy was fulfilled.*

ITS DIFFICULTIES.—If the common idea
be correct, that David was born 406 years
after the Exodus (taking the following data:
(i.) the fourth year of Solomon's reign = 480
1 Kings vi. 1. years after the Exodus; (ii.) David was
2 Sam. v. 4. seventy years old when he died; (iii.) the
Num. xxxii. 13. forty years' wanderings in the desert = 480

40 – 70 – 4 = 366 years *from the entrance into Canaan*), we find that as this period is spanned by three generations, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, each of the fathers must have been 100 years old at the time when he begat the son mentioned,—a fact which seems difficult to understand. The following solutions have been proposed: (i.) that it was the special design of God to grant children in their old age to Christ's ancestors; (ii.) that this genealogy is not traced through the first-born children, *e.g.* as in the case of David, who was the seventh son; (iii.) that there are some links omitted, *i.e.* that Boaz was not the son, but the grandson of Salmon and Rahab; thus only the distinguished names are mentioned, the less important ones being omitted. So in the genealogy of Saul, it seems probable that the names of several generations are omitted between Kish and Abiel, *e.g.* the name of Matri is not mentioned.

1 Chron. ii. 15.

1 Sam. ix. 1, 2.

1 Sam. x. 21.

The whole genealogy appears four times in the Bible: here; 1 Chron. ii. 10–12; Matt. i. 3–6; Luke iii. 32, 33. In the genealogy of Christ only four women are

18–22.

named, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba; of these at least three were not of Israelitish birth, showing that the seed of David, and, in consequence, the descent of Christ, could never be called purely Hebraic, as even into the royal tribe of Judah Gentile women had been incorporated.

NOTES ON THE CHARACTERS.

ELIMELECH. **The man of the world.**—A man of wealth (Jewish tradition) and high family. His want of faith belied his name ('God is my King'). Placed temporal advantages before spiritual blessings, and lived for the world rather than for God; in this he sinned, if his conduct be judged by Rom. xiv. 23: 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' See note on i. 1.

NAOMI. **The backslider restored.**—Awakened to repentance by affliction; i. 6, 21. showed her piety—(i.) by her consistent life, which attracted her Moabitish daughters-in-law; (ii.) by recognising God's hand i. 21. in her affliction; (iii.) by making no excuses for herself, and laying no blame upon her late husband for bringing her to i. 21. Moab; (iv.) by her humility; (v.) by her care for Ruth's welfare.

i. 7.
i. 8.
i. 11.
i. 7.
i. 11.
i 15.
See further note on i. 14.

ORPAH. **Indecision.**—Well-meaning; kind to her husband; dutiful towards Naomi, for whom she had a strong affection; started on the journey towards Bethlehem; stedfast for a time in her resolve, but at length yielded to the attractive power of Moab, and went back to her gods.

i. 16-18.
i. 16, ii. 12.
ii. 2, 10, 13.
ii. 2, 11, iii. 5.
ii. 18.
ii 2, 7, 23.
ii. 10-13.
ii. 10.

RUTH. **Decision for God.**—Sincere in her desire to accompany Naomi, and thus, undeterred by difficulties, gave her heart to the true God. Her religion shown in (i.) her humility; (ii.) her love and obedience to Naomi; (iii.) her unselfish spirit; (iv.) her industry; (v.) her gratitude; (vi.) her modesty. Her religion was not that of mere impulse, but a fixed and living principle.

ii. 1.
ii 4, iii. 5, 18, iv. 1.
ii. 4, 12.
ii. 8, 14-16, 20.
iii. 14.
iii. 12.
iii. 12, iv. 3-5.

BOAZ. **The righteous man.**—Wealthy and important. His righteousness shown in (i.) his attention to business; (ii.) his piety in everyday life; (iii.) his kindness; (iv.) his virtue; (v.) his truthfulness; (vi.) his justice.

We may also look upon him as the type of Christ. See Outline Lesson on 'Christ the Redeemer.'

THE KINSMAN. **Selfishness.**—Ready to

redeem the land so as to add to his own possessions, but unwilling to marry Ruth. His name unmentioned, whereas that of Boaz handed down as one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Matt. i. 5 Luke iii. 32

OUTLINE LESSONS

I.

The Wanderer.

'A better country, that is, an heavenly.'

Read Ruth i. 1–7, 19–21; learn Isa. liii. 6, lv. 7; Collect for 4th Sunday after Easter; hymns in 'Church and Sunday School Hymn Book' (S.S. Institute), 155, 184, 241, 251.

Sometimes have seen, perhaps, on the sea, a buoy with word WRECK painted upon it. It is to show that some ship has been wrecked there, and to warn sailor to steer clear of it, that his ship may not strike upon some hidden part of it. Or, have seen the red light on a railway signal-post —we call it a 'danger signal.' It is to warn the engine-driver of danger. So in
1 Tim. i. 19. Bible read of many wrecks of souls—see, if read rightly, many danger signals

(*e.g.* Balaam, Judas Iscariot, Demas); of one we have our Lord's own words, 'Remember Lot's wife.' Luke xvii. 32.

In this chapter have two such, Elimelech and Orpah. Of them must say they 'made shipwreck of their souls;' they are danger signals to warn us. Naomi, too, in some things a warning to us, though in others an example. May we never forget that 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,' and that 'all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:' why? 'that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.' Rom. xv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

First time we read of Naomi is as

WANDERING.

The book begins with tale of wandering. Picture to ourselves happy home in Bethlehem, father (Elimelech), mother (Naomi), two sons (Mahlon and Chilion). Not poor, but well off. Then a famine. Elimelech, frightened, leaves Bethlehem with his family, for fear lest want should come upon

him. In this showed want of faith in God. So the Bible begins with tale of wandering. The first wanderers had all they needed, yet disobeyed God's command, and thus became wanderers. Cain, too, a wanderer. In a word, all of us are by nature wanderers, wanderers from God and heaven.

Gen. iii. 2.
Gen. iii. 23. Gen. iv. 16; Jude 11.
See what Isaiah says, liii. 6.

Naomi wandered from Bethlehem. Thus turned her back on God's own land, left the fertile 'House of Bread,' she, her husband, her two sons. They went out of their own accord. No voice of God commanding so to do, as in case of Abraham or Joseph; was a false step. So now many wander from God. Pious parents, a situation in godly family, etc., all thought little of; like Prodigal Son, they leave the Father's home, want their own way.

Gen. xii. 1.
Matt. ii. 20.
Luke xv.

Naomi wandered to Moab. Went out 'full,' journeyed towards Moab. No famine, want, there, but something worse than these; was a land of idolaters, no worship of true God there. Thus though no famine of bread, there was a worse famine. See what Amos says of such a famine.

ver. 21.
Amos viii. 11.

Next hear of Naomi as

SOJOURNING.

Where? In the wicked Moab. Her sojourn a long one, ten years; see how Bible puts in 'they continued,' 'they dwelled.' There Elimelech died, perhaps soon after they arrived, yet Naomi remains still. There her two sons married two Moabitish women, and sinned in doing so, yet Naomi remains still. See power of sin when yielded to. She came with her husband simply for a visit there, she stays ten years. Beware of power of sin; it is not a thing to be trifled with, for 'the wages of sin is death.' But was she happy there? Are not told; yet sin has its pleasures. For how long? Only 'for a season.' Mark, do not read that God was with her, as He was with Joseph, with Samuel. It is His presence only that can give true happiness.

ver. 4.
ver. 2.
ver. 4.
Rom. vi. 23.
Heb. xi. 25.
Gen. xxxix. 2, etc.
1 Sam. iii. 19.

There is a Moab now; the world is Moab, lies in wickedness. No true happiness in living apart from God. Those who live for world, live life of slave, serve a hard taskmaster; and the end, eternal ruin.

1 John v. 19.
John viii. 34.

Once more see Naomi

RETURNING.

ver. 5. Her two sons die. She bethinks of Bethlehem; is plenty again there; she will return. Like Prodigal Son, 'comes to herself,' begins to see things in true light, turns her back on Moab, her face towards Bethlehem. Does not go alone; her two daughters-in-law start with her, then one goes back, the other remains with Naomi. Journey back a sad one, must have had thoughts of way in which she came out; vers. 20, 21. see what she says at Bethlehem. So sinner coming back to God thinks with remorse of his wasted life and opportunities.

Are we wandering from God? Then, if value our souls, let us take heed to our ways. Each step takes us farther from heaven, each step makes return more difficult. Beware of wandering, especially beware of the beginning of wandering, *e.g.* neglect of prayer, Bible reading, attendance Sol. Song ii. 15. at church. These are only 'little foxes,' yet 'they spoil the grapes.'

Rom. xiii. 11; Eph. v. 14. *Are we sojourning in Moab?* If so, may God by His Spirit awaken us from sleep.

Life is short, and after death no chance of repentance. The Father (as in the parable) stretches out His arms to clasp us to Himself. He is ready to forgive and to forget the past, waiting to welcome us to the better land, that heavenly country out of which we shall never wander again.

Isa. lv. 7. ¶ Heb. viii. 12.

II.

The Two Travellers.

'No man can serve two masters.'

Read Ruth i. 7–19, 22; learn Ps. cxix. 10, Matt. vii. 13, 14; Collect for 9th Sunday after Trinity; hymns, 276, 296, 308.

In a wood sometimes come to a place where the path divides into two. At first each of them seems to run by side of other, and in same direction, but soon the one begins to branch off from the other, and at last runs in an entirely opposite direction. So often with two lives. Two brothers, two sisters, for a long time alike in character; at length a change; at last plain that

they are travelling on different roads, those of which our Lord speaks in Matt. vii. 13, 14, the broad way and the narrow path.

Been reading of two young travellers, Orpah and Ruth, the widows of the two young men of whom we read last lesson. Like the two paths, at first their lives seem to run side by side, then a change, and in future take opposite directions. Shall see how they were

ALIKE.

(i.) *They started on their journey together.* Both born and bred in Moab, yet both seemed willing to leave it. Both loved Naomi, their mother-in-law, and thus left Moab with her. Both made a good beginning. So now, often see two young persons who seem to start together on journey towards heaven, maybe perhaps at time of Confirmation, when both profess themselves Christ's servants.

(ii.) *They both overcame opposition at first.* Naomi tried to dissuade them from accompanying her; both declared they will do so, both seemed in earnest. See their words.

Thus far have seen how they were alike, now see how they were

DIFFERENT.

(i.) *Orpah turned back towards Moab.* Why? Because difficulties too great and future too uncertain. Went certain distance —probably to border line separating Moab from Canaan—and then turned back. In fact, no real change of heart in her; like those spoken of in Parable of Sower, she 'had no root.' Thus went back to Moab and her gods. Her heart in Moab all the time. History of Orpah a sad warning. To her may be applied Gal. v. 7 and Matt. xii. 43–45. She was like those of whom St. John afterwards wrote.

Matt. xiii. 20, 21.
ver. 15.
1 John ii. 19.

(ii.) *Ruth went on to Bethlehem.* Hers was choice of true love. Consequences she minded not, so long as Naomi's God was her God. Was willing to forsake all and follow Him. And she had her reward; above all, she was privileged to become one of the ancestors of Christ Himself.

ver. 16.
Luke v. 11.
See our Lord's promise in Matt. xix. 29.

What choice have we made? We must each choose. There are only two roads—which have we chosen? If we would have

Ruth's reward, and have our names written in the Book of Life, must make Ruth's choice—life and death are set before us—which have we chosen? Like Orpah, we may start well, and yet there may be no real saving religion in us. What we need is a new heart. How solemn are Christ's words in John iii. 3. The choice is for eternity, let us take heed which road we choose.

Deut. xxx. 15.

III.

The Redeemer.

'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'

Read parts of Ruth iv.; learn Job xix. 25, 26, Isa. lix. 16; Collect for 2d Sunday after Easter; hymns, 153, 232.

Sad thing when loss falls upon a family, and home broken up. Bad times will sometimes come,—a bank may break, an investment fail; so home has to be given up, and property, perhaps, sold. A happy thing if we have followed our Lord's advice and laid up riches in heaven. In Israel different law existed. If Israelite com-

Matt. vi. 19, 20.

pelled through poverty to part with his land, it was to be 'redeemed,' *i.e.* bought back, by next of kin; and at year of jubilee it was anyhow to return to the family to which it originally belonged. Thus Naomi had sold the property which belonged to her husband Elimelech, and thinking Boaz the next of kin, called upon him to redeem it. He, however, shows Ruth that there is one still nearer than himself; but promises that if that kinsman refuses to redeem, he himself will do so. About Boaz, who redeemed, we learn three things.

Lev. xxv. 25.

iv. 3.

iii. 12, 13.

THE REDEEMER.

Picture to ourselves gate of the city; people going in and out to their work in fields; notice one of them; as he passes to go out of the gate Boaz calls to him. Why? Because he is the nearest of kin, and has right to redeem. Thus see that the redeemer must be related—next of kin.

ver. 1.

We, too, have a Redeemer; of Him Job speaks. He took our nature upon Him, that He might be our Redeemer. He became one of the human family—a man

Job xix. 25–27.

Heb. ii. 16, 17.

Heb. 15.

in all respects like to ourselves, but with-
1 Pet. ii. 22. out sin. Of Him Boaz was a type.

THE REDEEMER'S WORK.

When kinsman comes up, Boaz tells him of the land Naomi has sold, asking him whether he wishes to redeem. He does
ver. 4. so. But as next of kin there is a duty
ver. 5. he must discharge—must marry Ruth. (Though this was not law of Moses, it seems to have grown into a custom.) This
ver. 6. he refuses. Boaz thereupon steps forward and offers to redeem.

So with our great Redeemer. His work is to buy back what was lost. We had forfeited our lives. Christ bought them back with His death. We had forfeited our inheritance. Christ bought it back, that He might make us heirs of eternal life.

THE REDEEMER'S REWARD.

Boaz can now obtain his desire—can marry Ruth; he does so amidst the rejoicing and good wishes of people of
ver. 11–13. Bethlehem.

So our Redeemer. Reward for His work is to make those whom He redeemed

His bride. Thus the Church is spoken of as bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife. Church, redeemed not with silver and gold, but with precious blood of Christ, may well say, 'O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.'

Eph. v. 25.
Rev. xxi. 9.
1 Pet. i. 18, 19.
Is. xxvi. 13.

What do we know about our Redeemer? Not enough to know Him by name—must have His work applied to our souls. How? By the Holy Spirit. See what our Lord says of the Spirit's work. It is He who first shows us need of a Saviour, and then shows how Christ is the Saviour we need. Two things must never forget about our Redeemer—(i) *Our Redeemer is Almighty:* none can pluck us out of His hand; (ii.) *Our Redeemer is all-loving.* Was ever love like His? Is a love we can never fully comprehend, for it passeth knowledge. See what St. Paul says of it. May each of us partake of the Redeemer's love — have a heart-knowledge of the Redeemer's work; then, when He comes again to claim His bride, we shall sit down at His marriage-feast above.

John xvi. 13-15.
John x. 28.
Eph. iii. 19.
Rom. viii. 35-39.
Rev. xix. 7-9.

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